Adolescent tobacco use and exposure, Colorado 2001 and 2006

August 2007
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Background

The Colorado Healthy Kids Survey on Tobacco (CHKS-T) was first conducted in fall 2001 and was repeated in fall 2006. In both years, students in Colorado public schools were randomly chosen to represent the statewide student population. The CHKS-T will be administered again in 2008 and every two years thereafter.

Students were selected to complete CHKS-T from a stratified random sample of schools, with two classrooms per grade chosen in each school. The questionnaire was available in both English and Spanish. Participating schools informed parents in advance of the survey, and students voluntarily completed the survey or declined anonymously, with no benefit or consequence from either choice. A total of 16,157 students in 130 schools completed the survey in 2001, and 18,064 students from 137 schools completed it in 2006.

This report was prepared by the Tobacco Program Evaluation Group (TPEG), University of Colorado at Denver & Health Sciences Center. The work was supported by a grant from the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership (STEPP), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. The grant is funded by the 2004 voter approved tobacco tax increase.
About the Report

This report describes changes in tobacco-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviors among Colorado’s public middle and high school students. The topics include cigarette smoking, quitting, non-cigarette tobacco use, access to cigarettes, tobacco-related media, secondhand smoke exposure, and susceptibility to smoking initiation.

Some apparent differences between years represent real change, while others may be chance findings that occur when studying samples instead of the whole population. This report uses a "95% confidence" standard (p<0.05) to decide between the two possibilities. A rate that appears in **bold** typeface is "significantly" or "statistically" different from the comparable rate. In charts, a rate in **boxed bold typeface** means the same thing.

Differences between years also may arise from shifts in the population – for example, because the average student's age might be different between years. In preparing this report, tests of differences were adjusted ("standardized") for population changes in age, sex, and ethnicity. As a result, statistically different rates between years are not due to shifts in these population characteristics. All rates shown in the report are actual (non-standardized) estimates for the year they represent.
Summary of Findings

Between 2001 and 2006, the following progress occurred in Colorado:

- Middle school students who ever smoked cigarettes declined by 35%, to **16.7%**.
- Among high school students:
  - Ever smoking cigarettes declined by 20%, to **43.2%**.
  - Current cigarette smoking declined by 20%, to **14.6%**, surpassing the Healthy People 2010 goal of 16%.
  - Established smoking (100+ cigarettes in a lifetime) declined by 20%, to **56.1%** of current smokers.
  - Smoking ≥10 cigarettes per day declined by 44%, to **11.1%** of smokers.
  - Frequent smoking declined by 14%, to **43.8%** of smokers.
- Among grades 6-12 combined:
  - Current smokers who tried to quit in the past year increased by 15%, to **63.2%**.
  - Students exposed at least weekly to secondhand smoke declined by 18%, to **48.8%**.
  - Students who lived in a smoke-free home increased by 46%, to **48.5%**.

The following measures did not improve:

- On average, middle school students who had tried smoking were more likely to have smoked more than just a puff or two in 2006 compared to 2001.
- Use of nicotine products to help quit smoking fell by half, to **5.2%** of high school students trying to quit.
- Use of prescription medicine to help quit smoking fell 81%, to **0.6%** of high school students trying to quit.
- More than half (54.5%) of high school smokers were not asked for proof of age when they tried to buy cigarettes in 2006.
- Nearly half (47.6%) of underage high school smokers were sold cigarettes when they tried to buy them in 2006.
- Current cigar use increased by 41% among high school students, to **16.2%**.
- Among grades 6-12 combined, use of smokeless tobacco, bidis and kreteks remained at the same levels in 2006 as in 2001.

Disparities in progress:

- In middle school, current smoking was more common among Latino students than white students.
- Current smoking in high school was still most common among American Indian students, followed by white students.
- The high school decline in current smoking occurred only among white (Anglo) students.
- Quit attempts in high school increased among white smokers but not Latino smokers.
- Smokeless tobacco use was more common among white than Latino high school students.
- Latino and American Indian students were more exposed to secondhand smoke than white students.
- Latino, African American and American Indian students were less likely than white students to live in a smoke-free home.
Smoking and Quitting

Cigarette Smoking

Among all students, grades 6-12:
In 2006, 31.7% of students in grades 6-12 had ever smoked any cigarettes ("ever-smokers"), a significant decrease from 40.8% in 2001. Current smoking (any cigarettes in the past 30 days) was reported by 9.4% of students, not significantly changed from 11.2% in 2001.

Among middle school students:
The ever-smoking rate decreased overall and among both male and female students. Current smoking did not significantly change. In 2006, ever-smoking was slightly more common among male students than female students, while current smoking rates were similar among male and female students.

Nationally, 9.0% of female and 8.0% of male middle school students currently smoked cigarettes in 2004. Rates were fairly stable during 2002 to 2004, declining only marginally among males.¹ Colorado rates were similarly stable between 2001 and 2006 but were considerably lower than national rates at the start of the period.

Among high school students: Ever-smoking and current smoking decreased significantly in Colorado during 2001-06, overall and among both males and females. In 2006, smoking rates were similar between male and female students.

Nationally, 23.0% of female and 22.9% of male high school students currently smoked cigarettes in 2006.² Smoking prevalence among U.S. high school students increased during the 1990s, decreased from the late 1990s to 2003, and remained unchanged during 2003-05.

A large national decrease in current high school smoking occurred between 2001 (28.5%) and 2003 (21.9%).\(^3\) If Colorado followed the national trend, most of the improvement reported here would have occurred between 2001 and 2003, but survey data to evaluate this possibility are unavailable. Federal health objectives (Healthy People 2010) call for current smoking prevalence to be lower than 16% among high school students. Based on the 2006 CHKS-T results, Colorado has now achieved this objective.

Cigarette smoking rates increase by successive grades. During 2001-06, ever-smoking declined across all grades, and current smoking decreased among 8th, 9th, 11th, and 12th graders. In 2006, current smoking rates were similar between male and female students at every grade level.

### Levels of Cigarette Smoking

Adolescent smokers can be considered along a continuum defined by how much smoking experience they have accumulated during their lives, how recently they have smoked, and how frequently they are smoking. The current report uses these indicators to help describe the intensity of the smoking problem among Colorado students.

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<td>Puffers</td>
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<td>Experimenters</td>
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<td>Established</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current*</td>
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<td>Frequent</td>
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* Current smokers for this report includes students who have smoked more than few cigarettes in their lives (>5 cigarettes in 2006 and >10 cigarettes in 2001).

In 2006, puffers were more common, and established smoking was less common, among middle school students than high school students. However, smoking experimentation increased and puffer-status decreased in middle school during 2001-06. Together with the overall decline in ever-smoking, the changes suggest that fewer middle school students have ever smoked but those who have may be at a more advanced stage of use now than in 2001.

In high school, where the ever-smoking rate also declined during 2001-06, established smoking declined while experimentation became more common, suggesting a shift in high school toward less advanced use.

Smoking frequency and quantity indicate dependence. Among current smokers, established and frequent smoking was more common in high school than in middle school for both 2001 and 2006. During 2001-06, established smokers became less common in high school, as did those who smoked 10 or more cigarettes per day and those who smoked frequently. These results suggest that high school students who smoke cigarettes are doing so at lower levels than in 2001.
Dependence and Quitting

Measurement of smoking cessation among youth presents challenges, because adolescent smokers often are not yet dependent and easily alternate between smoking and stopping. In high school, the period when about half of dependent adult smoking originates, quit attempts increased during 2001-06, mainly due to an increase in quit attempts among female students. In 2006, female students attempted to quit significantly more often than male students.

In 2006, quit attempts were remarkably similar across most levels of smoking: current smokers, experimenters, established, current established, and frequent smokers. Smokers of 10 or more cigarettes a day reported fewer quit attempts (43.4%, similar to 2001) than smokers of fewer than 10 cigarettes a day.

While more high school smokers were attempting to quit in 2006, use of help programs and medications declined. Fewer than one in ten high school quit attempters (8.9%, down from 13.6% in 2001) used any form of assistance in trying to quit (including nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), a support program, or prescription medication). Use of NRT and prescription medications declined during 2001-06.

Two measures of dependence – craving a cigarette within three hours of the last one smoked, and smoking alone (rather than with other people) – were unrelated to the likelihood of reporting a quit attempt in the previous year.

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Non-Cigarette Tobacco

Use of tobacco in forms other than cigarettes remains a health hazard to adolescents. Use of these products is monitored for signs of increased use in response to tax-boosted cigarette prices and increased adoption of smoke-free policies.

Cigars

Cigar use increased during 2001-06 among high school students. In 2006, one in six high school students (16.2%, up from 11.5%) was a current cigar smoker (any in the past 30 days). In 2006, cigar smoking was more common among males than females at both middle and high school levels. High school students of both sexes smoked cigars more commonly than middle school students.

Nationally, 13% of high school students in 2004 were current cigar smokers, more commonly among males (18%) than females (8%). Approximately 5% of U.S. middle school students are current cigar smokers, 7% of males and 4% of females. Comparing Colorado to the nation, cigar smoking is slightly less common in Colorado middle schools but slightly more common in Colorado high schools, possibly suggesting a vulnerable period between middle and high school when cigar smoking increases.

While cigar use increased among high school students, less-than-daily use was the most common pattern in both 2001 and 2006. In 2006, more than half of current high school cigar smokers reported smoking a cigar on one or two of the past 30 days (53.4%, similar to 2001). More than one-fourth (28.6%, similar to 2001) reported smoking a cigar on six or more of the past 30 days.

Smokeless ("Spit") Tobacco

Smokeless tobacco (chew and moist snuff, also known as spit tobacco) use remained level during 2001-06, overall and among both male and female middle and high school students. In 2006, female students used chew or snuff less often than male students in both middle and high school.

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middle and high school. More male and female high school students used chew compared to their middle school counterparts.

Nationally, an estimated 4% of male middle school students and 10% of male high school students were current smokeless tobacco users in 2004. In Colorado, slightly fewer male middle school students and slightly more male high school students use chew compared to national rates. Nationally as in Colorado, fewer females currently use smokeless tobacco: nationally, 1.9% of middle school and 1.4% of high school females.6

During 2001-06, dual users – students who smoke cigarettes and also use smokeless tobacco – remained stable minorities. In 2006, fewer than four in ten current smokeless tobacco users also currently smoked cigarettes (38.5%, similar to 2001), and one in five current smokers also currently used smokeless tobacco (21.0%, similar to 2001). The majority of cigarette smokers and smokeless tobacco users currently use one or the other product, not both products. Cigarette smoking among smokeless tobacco users is more common than smokeless tobacco use among cigarette smokers.

Other Tobacco Use

The youth CHKS-T questionnaire asked about lifetime use of additional forms of tobacco, but not current use. During 2001-06, lifetime use of bidis or kreteks remained stable among middle school students (2.2%, similar to 2001) and high school students (10.6%, similar to 2001). In 2006 only, students were also asked about use of newer products like sheesha or hookahs/waterpipes and spitless tobacco. Use of other tobacco products is higher among males than females in both middle and high school.

Nationwide, approximately 2.6% of high school students currently used bidis in 2004, more males (3.6%) than females (1.6%). Fewer middle school students (2.3%) report current use of bidis. Similar patterns are present with kretek use, with 1.5% of middle school students and 2.3% of high school students reporting current use.6

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Access to Cigarettes

All states, including Colorado, prohibit the sale of tobacco to minors under 18 years of age.7 In Colorado, penalties include fines to the clerk, the business where the sale occurs, and the minor attempting to purchase the tobacco product. Colorado does not license cigarette sales, and additional penalties such as license suspension do not exist. Colorado also prohibits furnishing tobacco product samples or single cigarettes to a minor, and cigarette vending machines are required to have lockout devices in public, youth-accessible places.8

Despite legal restrictions, underage smokers still manage to purchase cigarettes. Nationwide, about one in seven underage students who smoke usually buy their own cigarettes in a store.9 More than half who try to buy cigarettes are not asked to show proof of age, and more than half are not refused a sale of tobacco due to age. These rates were stable during 2002-2004, indicating a lack of progress in recent years toward reducing minor access to cigarettes.10

In 2006 in Colorado, having someone else buy cigarettes was the most common access mode among current high school smokers (40.1%, similar to 2001), followed closely by having someone give them cigarettes (34.7%, similar to 2001). Access patterns varied by gender. Compared to male students, female students less often bought cigarettes and more often had someone else buy them. No significant differences in cigarette access mode were found during 2001-06.

Among students who have never smoked but think cigarettes are easy to get, 19.5% were highly susceptible* to smoking, more than twice the 7.4% who are susceptible among those who think cigarettes are hard to get. This result suggests that the belief cigarettes are hard to get may protect never-smokers from trying to smoke. The possibly riskier belief that cigarettes are easy to get is more common in high school (55.7% of never-smokers, down from 62.4%) than in middle school (22.8%, similar to 2001).

* Susceptibility is assessed by asking, “At any time next year do you think you will smoke a cigarette?” Any answer other than "definitely not" indicates increased likelihood of smoking in the next year.11

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Enforcement

Colorado law does not require tobacco customers to show proof of age – clerks are free to decide whether to ask for proof and what forms of proof they accept. In 2006, more than half of under-age high school current smokers who tried to buy cigarettes were not asked for proof of age (54.5%, similar to 2001), and almost half who tried to buy were sold cigarettes (47.6%, similar to 2001). Refusal to sell was more common when clerks did ask for proof of age.

Colorado law also requires schools to be completely tobacco-free for students, staff, and visitors. However, more than one-third of middle school current smokers (38.0%, similar to 2001) and half of high school current smokers (50.5%, similar to 2001) reported smoking on school grounds at least once in the previous 30 days. High school students (19.2%) and middle school students (14.1%) also reported seeing teachers or other school employees smoking on school grounds.
Media

Mass media education when combined with other interventions prevents tobacco use initiation and increases cessation among adolescents, especially when designed as a long-term, high-intensity counter-advertising campaign. Exposure to even one state-sponsored anti-tobacco advertisement every four months has been shown to improve tobacco-related attitudes and knowledge and decrease smoking behavior.

In contrast, some media exposures promote smoking, such as viewing smoking in movies, which is strongly associated with smoking initiation among adolescents. Smoking in films has increased in the early 21st century and is more common in youth-rated films than in adult-rated films, making it a growing risk factor for smoking initiation.

Anti-Tobacco Media Exposure

Exposure to anti-tobacco messages declined during 2001-06. Fewer students reported hearing such messages at least every 2-3 days (44.3%, down from 51.7%), and slightly more students heard no anti-tobacco message at all in the past month (16.5%, up from 12.7%). In 2006, current smokers were more likely to report hearing messages every 2-3 days (56.1%) than non-current smokers (49.9%) and never smokers (41.0%).

More than one-third of all students in 2006 (37.0%, with no difference by smoking status) reported getting most of their information about cigarettes and tobacco from anti-tobacco advertisements, indicating that these advertisements are an important source of protective information for adolescents. Current smokers reported slightly different patterns than the general student population, citing tobacco company ads (35.6%) and friends or other youth (51.5%) as their main source of tobacco-related information.

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Adolescent smoking is associated with seeing smoking in movies. In 2006, nearly two-thirds of current smokers (64.7%, up from 58.2%) saw smoking in half or more of the movies they watched. Current smokers were more likely to see smoking in movies than non-current smokers, who saw smoking more often than never-smokers.

The “Own Your C” Campaign

In fall 2006, Colorado launched an innovative Internet-based media campaign called Own your C. The campaign was advertised on television from November to mid-December, as well as online and with a mobile van. The campaign directs adolescents to an interactive web site (www.ownyourc.com) which promotes healthy choices. More than one-fourth of male students and almost one in five female students had heard of the campaign. Awareness was similar across grade levels and smoking status. Slightly fewer female than male students had heard of Own your C or visited the website. Slightly more current smokers (5.1%) visited the website than never smokers (2.4%). Most students learned of the campaign through television.

Approximately 10% of the CHKS-T sample completed the survey before Own Your C ads began airing on TV.
Secondhand Smoke

The Surgeon General has concluded that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS). Exposure can cause bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma attacks, coughing, phlegm, wheezing, breathlessness, and ear infections among children. Yet, on average, youth aged 12-19 are more likely than people of other ages to live in a household with at least one smoker, and youth are exposed to more SHS than adults.\textsuperscript{16}

During 2001-06, SHS exposure declined among Colorado youth. In 2006, about half of students were exposed to SHS in a closed space during the previous week (48.8%, down from 59.2%). Exposure declined in both rooms (42.2%, down from 53.5%) and vehicles (34.6%, down from 41.0%). Current smokers were exposed more often than non-current smokers, who were exposed more often than never-smokers. In 2006, middle school students were exposed to SHS less often than high school students in rooms (37.4% vs. 45.8%) and in cars (28.8% vs. 38.9%).

Nationally in 2001-02, about half of students were exposed to SHS in a room, and about one-third in a vehicle, during the previous week. Colorado students appear to have slightly lower exposure to SHS indoors but similar exposure in vehicles.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{secondhand_smoke_exposure.png}
\caption{Secondhand smoke exposure (past 7 days) by student smoking status}
\end{figure}


Nationally in 2006, most students who smoked and almost one-third of those who had never smoked lived in a household where someone else smoked.\textsuperscript{18} Smoke-free homes are essential for protecting residents from SHS exposure. During 2001-06, more Colorado students reported living in smoke-free homes (no smoking allowed anywhere). Smoke-free households were similarly common among middle and high school students.

Knowledge that SHS exposure is risky may be associated with smoking behaviors and intention to smoke.\textsuperscript{19} In 2006, most Colorado students thought that SHS is very harmful (59.5%); one-third thought it is somewhat harmful (31.4%), and one in 11 thought it is not very harmful (9.1%).

Almost three-fourths of Colorado students in 2006 (71.2%) said they dislike being around someone who is smoking.

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Tobacco and Ethnicity

In this section, each ethnic group's most recent results (2006) are compared to its results in 2001 and to recent (2006) results among non-Latino white students. Significant differences from the non-Latino white population are noted with an asterisk (*).

Cigarette Smoking

Ever-smoking decreased during 2001-06 among (non-Latino) white and Latino students in middle school, and African American, Latino, black and American Indian students in high school. In 2006, ever-smoking was more common among Latino students of all ages than white students. In high school, ever-smoking was more common among American Indian students than white students, and less common among African American students than white students.

Current smoking decreased during 2001-06 only among white high school students, although in 2006, white high school students continued to have the 2\textsuperscript{nd} highest rate of current smoking, behind American Indian high school students. In 2006, Latina students (10.8%) smoked less often than Latino male students (14.7%), and female African American students (4.6%) smoked less often than their male counterparts (13.7%). Both groups of female students smoked less often than female white students (16.5%).

Nationally in 2006, 26% of white, 22% of Latino, and 13% of black high school students were current smokers.\textsuperscript{20} Smoking rates among all three ethnic groups appear to be lower in Colorado than nationally.

In 12th grade, 20.6% of white students were current smokers in 2006, a rate similar to the smoking rate among white adults. In contrast, 16.7% of Latino 12th grade students were current smokers, considerably lower than the rate among Colorado Latino adults.

In middle school, current smoking rates remained stable among all ethnic groups during 2001-06. Only Latino middle school students (4.0%, similar to 2001) smoked at significantly different rates than white students (2.1%, similar to 2001) in 2006. Smoking patterns across middle and high school suggest that Latino students may begin smoking earlier than white students but may not transition as often to regular or frequent smoking. Nationally in 2004, 9% of white and 10% of Hispanic middle school students currently smoked cigarettes, much higher rates than those among Colorado middle school students.

Frequent smoking (smoking on 20 or more of the previous 30 days) was more common among white than Latino current smokers in high school (46.6% vs. 29.5%). Other ethnic samples were too small (<50 each) to compare quit attempts.

Quit attempts increased significantly during 2001-06 among white high school students (63.0%, up from 54.3%) and were level among Latino students (63.0%, similar to 2001). Quit attempt rates were not compared for other ethnic groups due to small samples (fewer than 50 each).

**Other Tobacco**

Smokeless tobacco: Male high school students had the highest rate of current use in 2006, with a higher rate among whites (13.4%, similar to 2001) than Latinos (8.8%, similar to 2001) or Asian Americans (5.9%, similar to 2001). Smokeless tobacco use increased substantially among African American male high school students (15.0%, up from 6.2%).

Cigars: Current use increased significantly among white and Latino male and female high school students, as well as female American Indian students. In 2006, rates were similar between ethnic groups. Use was more common among male students than female students of most ethnicities.

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Tobacco novelties: Ever-use of bidis, kreteks, sheesha, hookahs/waterpipes or spitless tobacco was higher among white male high school students than Latino students and higher among white female students than Latina, African American, and Asian American female students. Ever-use was also higher among male students than female students of most ethnicities. Use of bidis and kreteks remained level during 2001-06 among all ethnicities.

Secondhand Smoke

In 2006, white students reported slightly less SHS exposure than Latinos and much less than American Indian students. Both white and Latino students reported a decrease in SHS exposure during 2001-06.

Smoke-free homes became significantly more common during 2001-06 among all but African American students. In 2006, smoke-free home rules were most commonly reported by white students.
Susceptibility, Knowledge, and Other Factors

In 2006, 12.1% of never-smokers indicated high susceptibility to smoking* (down from 15.8%). Other characteristics were also related to student intentions to smoke.

| Percent of students susceptible to smoking in the next year, by other risk factors, 2006 |
|---------------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                           | No  | Yes     |
| at least one best friend smokes            | 7.8%| 21.6%   |
| no smoke-free home rule                    | 8.6%| 15.8%   |
| live with smoker                           | 10.4%| 16.0%   |
| best friends approve of smoking            | 8.6%| 21.7%   |
| think it's easy to get cigarettes          | 7.4%| 19.5%   |
| no school adult said don't smoke           | 10.7%| 13.6%   |
| parents do not often express               |     |         |
| desire that student not smoke              | 9.0%| 14.5%   |

* Susceptibility is assessed by asking, “At any time next year do you think you will smoke a cigarette?” Any answer other than "definitely not" indicates increased likelihood of smoking in the next year.

Nearly all current smokers had one or more best friends who smoked (94.9%), compared to two-thirds (64.8%) of non-current smokers and one-fourth (26.4%) of never-smokers. Almost three-fourths of never-smokers (73.7%) said their best friends would disapprove of them smoking.

In 2006, almost one-third of students (30.9%) held one or more inaccurate beliefs about tobacco and dependence. A belief that smoking for 1-2 years is safe became more common during 2001-06. In general, inaccurate beliefs were most common among current smokers.

| Percent of students with inaccurate beliefs or knowledge about tobacco 2001-06 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Students who believe:                                         | Total | Current smokers | Noncurrent smokers | Never smokers |
| It's safe to smoke for 1-2 years, then quit.                  | 10.4% (up from 7.2%) | 28.8% (up from 20.7%) | 16.3% (up from 9.7%) | 6.3% (up from 3.8%) |
| Quitting is easy, even after 1-2 years of smoking. (not asked in 2001) | 17.8% | 33.6% | 24.4% | 13.6% |
| Oral tobacco doesn't cause cavities or gum disease. (not asked in 2001) | 6.9% | 10.8% | 8.8% | 5.5% |

Smoking was strongly associated with school performance and with future educational plans. High school students who planned to go to college or graduate school had significantly lower smoking rates than those who said they would not (ever-smoking: 40.3% vs. 58.2%; current smoking: 12.2% vs. 26.6%).
Smoking was weakly associated with being at risk of becoming overweight – ever-smoking was slightly more common among students in the 85th to <95th percentile of body mass index (BMI) than students with healthy weight (46.9% vs. 42.1%). Current smoking was not associated with BMI.

Students who were not meeting the recommended level of physical activity (60 minutes or more on 5 of the past 7 days) had current smoking rates of 16.6%, significantly higher than 12.4% among those who did meet the recommended level of physical activity.

Finally, students who were involved in at least one after-school activity reported lower levels of smoking than those not involved in an after-school activity.

![Smoking rates among high school students by involvement in after-school activities, 2006](chart.png)